



CA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
BUSINESS NAME

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# Braille Bites

## California School for the Blind

VOLUME 7, EDITION 2

MARCH 2016

### Superintendent's Message

Welcome to our second edition of *Braille Bites*. **CSB** staff and students have been busy since our last issue. This issue of *Braille Bites* is packed with numerous articles. It's our largest issue thus far. It is obvious that our staff is providing a range of exciting experiences for our students. Read about Red Carpet & White Canes: a Pixar Experience. Learn how our students encountered elephant seals at Año Nuevo.

Students in our residential program enjoyed attending the San Francisco Warriors Basketball Game. With support from the Lions Center for the Blind & Visually impaired, students were able to watch team warm-up at courtside, and meet the players during halftime. Other students enjoyed an evening at Lost World Adventure. They experienced the largest indoor play structure. All dorm students were invited to Winter Ball. Students were served a delicious dinner, and danced the night away.

**CSB**'s education team has created many new programs that allow students to express themselves through art, physical education, volunteerism, and experiential learning. Read about **CSB**'s new paint room and enjoy photos of our students ice skating. Learn how our students are giving back by participation in **CSB** Cares, our newest campus club. Students expressed their gratitude for staff, students, and family during a special assembly. Also, read about



**CSB**'s Short Course Program, and the experiences students had when an ambulance visited our campus.

**CSB** staff believes strongly in continuous improvement. To that end, our administrative team presented and exhibited at the annual conference of the Association of California School Administrators. Also, teachers participated in making revisions to our school report card. All of these activities make **CSB** an innovative, exciting place to learn and thrive.

I hope you enjoy reading the latest edition of our school's newsletter.

# THANK YOU!!!!

We would like to thank the students and staff for supporting the food and animal drive for the Tri City Food Bank and the Fremont Animal Shelter. Both facilities were appreciative of your generosity. CSB rocks!

Thank you for caring,  
Brian, Dalena, Eugenia, Evelyn, Jenna,  
Megan and Tommy



## CSB Cares!

By: Veronica Gunn, AT Teacher

**CSB Cares!** is a new club that discusses and researches global and local issues/concerns (e.g., recycling, homeless pets) and encourages students to make a difference in their school and community. Recently, we discussed California's drought and wrote water conservation tips that were shared with the entire campus on the morning announcements. Students in **CSB Cares!** are responsible for collecting recyclable items on an on-campus route each week.



Our first project is to collect money and pet food for the Pet Pantry program at the Humane Society of Silicon Valley. The Pet Pantry program is an amazing program that helps reduce the number of animals surrendered to shelters. When people who are having financial difficulties apply to the program, they can receive free pet food so that their pets can remain in their homes. We will be collecting donations through the end of April.

## CSB paint room reopens!

By: Minda Tayam, Art Teacher

The new painting room has opened and students are making a great variety of artwork. The painting room features a special table with wells that hold cups of paint in place. A wooden shape beside each cup serves as a tactile guide for locating the paint. Colors are labeled in print and braille and arranged in a consistent order. As students familiarize themselves with the layout of the table, they become more independent in selecting and returning materials. Students paint on large sheets of paper pinned to the walls or on an easel. The dark blue walls provide a contrasting background for the white paper, which may be helpful for those who have low vision.

Some students who have low vision may see the colors they want to use, but how meaningful is painting when you don't see colors? Students' understanding of color varies with their unique experiences. Some have a memory of colors if they previously had vision. Often students are interested in the colors commonly found in the world around them. Sometimes though, creating a representational picture is not the goal. The purpose of painting is simply in doing, engaging in a process that children enjoy--the sensory experience of applying brush to paper. Marco, who is often in the painting room, says that he doesn't need to see the colors to enjoy painting. "I like moving the brush," he says. "Making circles and lines is fun.

I can read the names of colors because they're in braille." Other "regulars" have this to say: "I like to paint because when I have blank paper I can make anything-- it's very relaxing," says Jayna. "I get ideas from nature and from my imagination. It feels good to paint," says Mitzy. Athena adds, "I like painting because you can create your own little world on paper. It's about expressing yourself." From animals and landscapes to dramatic abstract paintings, students share stories, feelings, and ideas through their work.





## The Warriors Game!

By: Patrick Weseman, Evening Counselor

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind and the Lions Center for the Blind teamed up to see our World Champion Golden State Warriors take on Charlotte Hornets at the Oracle Arena in Oakland.

Fifteen students from the **CSB** Residential Program got the opportunity to watch the Warriors attempt their 24th straight victory at home. The students enjoyed the treat of watching the Warriors during their pre-game shoot around from courtside. There were Ooh's and Ahh's from the students as they heard the swishes of the nets and the bouncing of the balls beating in time with pulsating music from the DJ. "I like this better than the game," said Nathan P, which echoed the sentiment for most of the students.

Students cheered as the Warriors took an early lead as the "Splash Brothers" (Steph Curry and Klay Thompson) were hitting threes. "That is what they do," said Isaac C.

At halftime, the students giggled with glee as they got to line the ramp in wait for the Warriors. "This is one of the coolest things that I have ever done," said Parker I. The students were all smiles as they slapped hands with players as they returned to the court.

The Warriors ended the game with a 111-101 win, but that was secondary to the good time enjoyed by the students. The Warriors slogan, "It's A Great Time Out" rang true with **CSB** students as they detailed the event on the ride home. It continued to resonate as students continued to share the fun of this experience with all who would listen.



## Report Cards

By: Sharon Sacks, Superintendent

The **CSB** education staff has refined and revised its report card. When you review your student's report card, you will notice information on each benchmark (objective) with a rating scale of 1-4. Also, teachers have additional room to include written comments about student progress. Please note that at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters, families will be receiving report card information about IEP goals & objectives, and information about progress within specific classes like Art, Music, Assistive Technology, and Orientation & Mobility. We hope this new report card will be easy to navigate, and provide you with valuable information regarding your student's progress.

## Annual Año Nuevo trip

By: Stacey Colley, O&M Teacher

On a very clear and sunny February 4th, new students and current students joined staff and docents at Año Nuevo State Park in Pescadero, CA. Twelve students participated including Manuel, Hector, Marco, Mitzy, Antonio, Jaira, Brian, Dalena, Zoey, Miriam, Parker, and Carlos. Each paired in groups with a knowledgeable docent for a two hour hike to see elephant seals in their natural habitat. The hike was filled with stops to breathe in the fresh salty air, listen to the birds, feel animal skulls to compare their sizes, and lastly hear and smell the giant community of elephant seals with their pups sunbathing on the beach just feet away! Students stood on top of a sand dune while commenting on the silly sounds the seals made and tried to decipher which voice belonged to the adult female, male, and baby as they all sound very different. After a long and rewarding hike, everyone sat down to lunch and shared their experiences. All in all, it was another successful trip to Año Nuevo!



## Christmas with the Celts

By: Tamera Watson, Supervising Counselor

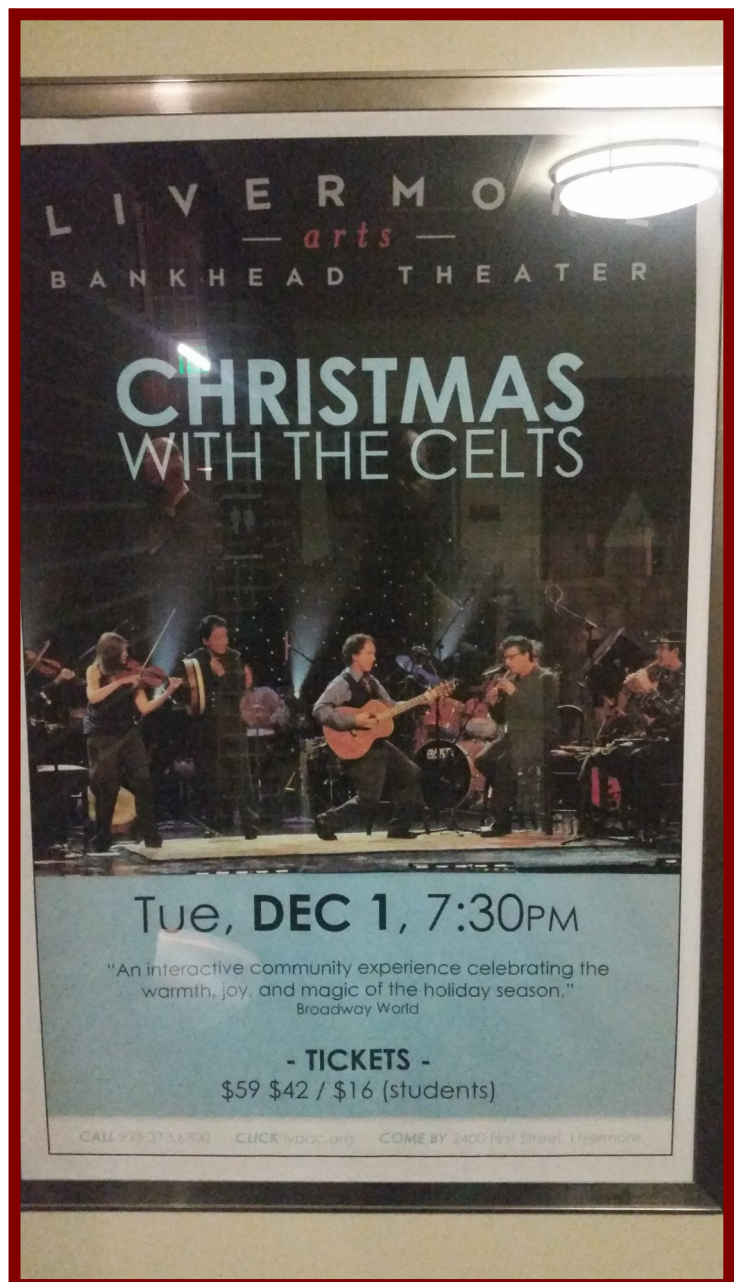
It was a cold and frosty night. All the students were brimming with anticipation to finally see and hear the group that they eagerly awaited to experience.

The lights went dark and the beat, the roar and the rumble of the drums began the performance. The beautiful singer began with a song that immediately made us move our feet and clap our hands. We were captivated with the group's expertise at playing the penny whistle, Bodhran, fiddle, guitar, piano, and Uilleann Pipe. They sang ancient Irish and Scottish carols dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. They blended modern drum beats and pop vocal styles with ancient instruments.

It left us mesmerized and wanting more. So a few of us purchased CDs.

After the wonderful performance we strolled over to Cream where everyone picked out their favorite cookies and ice cream to make delicious ice cream sandwiches. Warm cookies plus cold ice cream, who could ask for anything more.

What a magical night! A night we will long remember and a great start to the Holiday season.





## Ambulance visit

By: Erica Hogle, O&M Teacher

An emergency medical technician (EMT) visited **CSB!** Students got to explore the ambulance and several of the devices inside that are used in case of medical emergencies. Several students sat in the driver's seat and discovered the buttons and switches that control the siren and flashing lights. Others strapped students onto the gurney and learned how to bring the "patients" out of the vehicle. The EMT spoke about what her job is like and gave them some tips on how to be safe during an emergency. She also included some interesting stories that she has experienced on the job. Students were excited to have such a special visitor come and teach them about this important profession and learn more about what an ambulance can really do.



## Ice Skating in Dublin

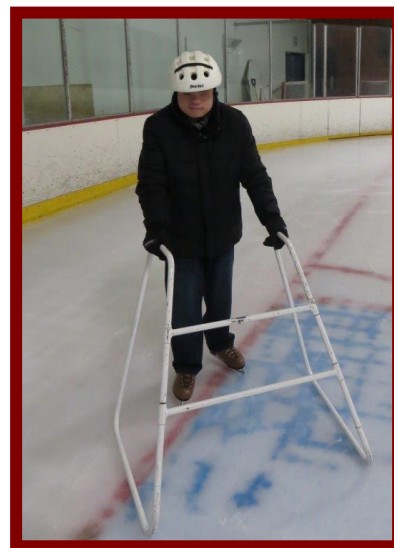
By: Mary Alice Ross, APE Teacher

The students in the transition program (and some high school students) began ice-skating in January and will finish the program at the end of February. After eight weeks of ice-skating, the student's skill level improves dramatically.

Here are some photos of the students using different techniques while ice-skating. Some of the ways a student learns to skate are: holding onto the wall, using a skate aid, and/or using "human guide".

Within a group setting, each student uses the individual technique that best suits him/her.

This is one of the most challenging units that we teach in Adapted Physical Education.



## A Night at the Pixar Studios

By: Ann Linville and students

**CSB** staff and students had the honor of participating in a White Canes and Red Carpet event at Disney's Pixar Studios. This event gave blind and visually impaired adults and children the opportunity to BETA test an Apple App created by Pixar. Participants had the opportunity to utilize Disney and Pixar's brand new Descriptive Video Service (DVS) application. DVS describes the visual elements of a film or television show which are important in understanding what is occurring at the time and the plot as a whole.



All of the participants had a wonderful time and enjoyed the experience. There wasn't a dry eye in the house and all who participated found the experience very rewarding.

"If you like the movies Frozen, Finding Nemo, and Toy Story, then you should keep reading. Three months ago I went to Pixar with a couple of classmates and Ms. Linville. We went to see a special audio screening of The Good Dinosaur. When we got to Pixar we walked on the red carpet, ate snacks, and talked to movie producers. After that we sat in a movie theater with our iPads and headphones to watch the movie. The best part was talking to the director of Frozen and his daughter, Elsa. It was so much fun and I will never forget this experience!" – Jayna Navarro

"I went with a group from my school to Pixar Studios. We were invited to go there to try out this new audio describer. We got to walk on the red carpet, try these treats called brownie s'more bites, and see life size statues of Pixar movie characters. We also got to try out a new audio device that describes the movie to us, it tells us what characters are doing, such as when the eggs where hatching. We had to download the audio describer to our IDevices to watch The Good Dinosaur. My favorite part was the whole trip. The audio device worked good. Before leaving they gave us The Good Dinosaur baseball caps." – Natalie Charles



"Everyone has heard about a film company called Pixar right? They made some of the



## A Night at the Pixar Studios (continued)

greatest movies of all time like Inside Out, Planes, and Frozen. Pixar made a new movie that just came out called The Good Dinosaur, and a few months ago my friends and I got to go to Pixar to see it ourselves! When we got there I was so excited I could hardly talk at all; all I could really say was “wow I’m really at Pixar”. Before the movie we had to put this special app on our iPads that allowed us to receive audio description that explained what was happening in the movie as we watched it. Also, while we waited for the movie



to start we took a look around – we touched and took pictures with all the statues that were there, we even saw a big stuffed animal dinosaur. We were petting it and accidentally knocked him over! There was a big velvet red carpet that went all the way to the end of the room. I must have walked up and down it 500 times. I mean really, I couldn’t stop!

When we watched the movie I couldn’t stop laughing, and the app worked very well.

We even got to meet some of the producers of the movie. All and all, it was an incredible experience and one that I will never forget.” – Athena Scopelite

“I appreciate that Mrs. Linville took me to this event. I learned a lot. It gave me the chance to meet some well-known people from the blind organizations and I hope that Pixar makes other studios follow their lead.” – Billy Lei

“We also got to walk the red carpet that was a lot of fun. I think that it is so

cool that they are making an app where you can watch audio description anywhere. I think being able to watch movies with audio description is very important.” – Terresa Harlan

**CSB** students and staff thank Pixar for including us in this wonderful event, and for making watching movies a wonderful experience and accessible to all!

## Tricks of the Trade and Orientation and Mobility Skills at Home: A Family Workshop Opportunity

By: Katie Smith, O&M Teacher

On Saturday, November 14, 2015, select **CSB** staff and families attended a workshop alongside their child who is blind or visually impaired. The objective of the workshop was to teach daily living skills and orientation and mobility skills to apply when students are at home. On this day, families gathered in the **CSB** Theater for a welcome and brief presentation which introduced the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) Skills and the importance of child participation in every day routines. With the support of Gaby Cohen, Scott Smith, Maureen Green, Angela Martyn, and Yurika Vu, families participated in a full day of hands-on activities. Families were divided into groups and rotated through stations where they learned about money folding and identification, telling time, basic food preparation, eating skills, cleaning a surface, and familiarizing their child to a new room. Parents were given the option to participate in each station under blindfold or to learn teaching tips for their child to practice skills at home. Students were empowered by learning how to guide a family member and observe their family use a white cane under blindfold. James S. commented that it was worth waking up early on a Saturday to see his dad use a cane!

A second family workshop took place on Saturday, December 5, 2015, at the Southern California Diagnostic Center. The emphasis on this day was to work with students and families to encourage daily living skills participation at home. Students were introduced to kitchen appliances (toaster, microwave, and oven) and taught basic safety. Students made a snack to share with family and contributed to our Subway lunch by making a microwave cheese dip. Parents were exposed to ideas for organizing and labeling food and personal items around their house.

I want to take a moment to thank the following: my talented teaching team, Sharon Sacks, Adrian Amandi, Evelyn Pate and Charles Udeze, Eddie Huggins and the maintenance crew, Parents and Friends Association, Tammy Ferea, Cathy Suazo, Ann Linville and Carla Shah, and Judy from the Southern CA Diagnostic Center. Most importantly- I want to thank families for entrusting us to teach your child and taking time from your weekend to attend the workshop! I was touched by your presence. Thank you!!





## Winter Gala

By: Nadrina Weseman, Supervising Counselor

On Wednesday, January 13, 2016, the residential program held their annual Winter Gala. Our dining hall was transformed into a winter wonderland. Blue and white snowflakes adorned the walls of the dining hall. The tables were decorated with silver and white table cloths, blue metallic table scatter in the shape of snowflakes was placed on each table. Beautiful silver, blue and white branches were placed on top of blue pebbles in crystal vases.

Approximately 50 students dressed in their finest clothing attended the formal affair. The students enjoyed a delicious dinner of Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo and spaghetti. After dinner the students danced the night away to their favorite songs played by our DJ Paul Dominguez.



## A Goalball Visitor!

By: Jami Ordenana, Counselor

An unexpected visitor came by Goalball practice this week. Some might call him a ringer, an undefeated King of the Mountain Goalball player, or even Boss Man. We know him as Adrian "The Goat" Amandi. The kids had a great time playing with and against him this week. Gabe scored a goal on him. Stuart taught him that he might want to play wearing a cup next time. Adrian's smile was contagious to all students and staff. He is always welcome to come back.... For a rematch.



## Fostering an Attitude of Gratitude

By: Gina Ouellette, Director of Student Services

This past October, the **CSB** Psychology Department held an all-school assembly focused on the theme of *Fostering an Attitude of Gratitude*. During the assembly, students learned more about the concept of gratitude as well as the social and psychological benefits of being grateful. During small group activities, each student was asked to share something about a family member and something about a classmate that he or she was grateful for. Next, each student was asked to share what they were grateful for at **CSB**. Finally, students were encouraged to share at least one thing about themselves that they were grateful for. This activity generated a great deal of personal exploration and discussion within each group. After each topic was discussed in small groups, students were given the opportunity to share what they were grateful for with the whole school. Many of the comments were very enlightening:

### **Share at least one thing about a family member that you are grateful for...**

*"I am thankful for my stepmother because she bandages my bruises and scrapes."*

*"I am thankful for both of my parents because they support me in the activities I'm interested in."*

*"I'm grateful for my mom because she makes sure my sister and I are happy."*

*"I'm thankful for my dad because he takes me to my doctor's appointments every week."*

*"I am thankful for my whole family because they have supported me through my recovery."*

*"I'm grateful for my parents because if I needed them, they would drop whatever they were doing and come help me."*

*"I'm grateful for my mom. Just having her in my life is such a blessing."*

*"I'm thankful for my parents because they support me and provide me with the things I need."*

*"I'm grateful for my sister because she lets me listen to my own radio station."*

*"I am grateful for all of my family because they care about me."*

*"I am thankful for my brother because he always makes me happy."*

### **Share at least one thing about a classmate that you are grateful for...**

*"I am thankful for my classmate who showed me how to use a radio."*

*"I am thankful for my roommate helping me out."*

*"I am thankful for my classmate because whenever I'm sad she makes me laugh."*

*"I'm thankful for my classmate because he helps me on the computer."*

*"I'm grateful for my classmate for being a friend for such a long time."*

*"I am thankful for my classmate because he helps me and he understands me."*

*"I am grateful for my classmate because she is a good person to talk to and gives good advice."*



## Fostering an Attitude of Gratitude (Continued)

*"I am grateful for my classmate because we dance together."*

*"I am grateful for my classmate because she plays piano all the time."*

### Share at least one thing about **CSB** that you are grateful for...

*"I am grateful for my teachers for teaching me every day."*

*"I am thankful for **CSB** because being here has made me want to learn more."*

*"I am thankful for the O&M Program because they helped me learn my routes."*

*"I am thankful for **CSB** because they accept me for who I am and they don't tease me."*

*"I am thankful for **CSB** because I can take classes at my own pace if I'm struggling."*

*"I'm grateful for the **CSB** Psychologists."*

*"I'm grateful for **CSB** because I get to do a lot of activities without being teased or bullied."*

*"I appreciate the independent living skills I'm learning at **CSB**."*

*"I'm thankful for music classes because I'm learning how to play piano."*

*"I am grateful for the **CSB** Rocket Shop and helping people with buying food and coffee."*

### Share at least one thing about yourself that you are grateful for...

*"I am thankful for myself because I can sing and be kind to other people."*

*"I am thankful that I am always smiling and happy."*

*"I am proud that I have the ability to learn things."*

*"I am thankful for my art skills."*

*"I am proud of learning to read Braille."*

*"I am grateful for being eager to learn."*

*"I am thankful I can be myself and not worry about what other people think."*

*"I'm grateful for my mental strength and perseverance."*

*"I'm grateful for being headstrong and determined, and for my compassion for others before myself."*

*"I'm grateful for my sense of humor."*

*"I am grateful for my health."*

*"I am grateful I can hear music."*

*"I am grateful for my good heart."*

The assembly wrapped up with a discussion on how to practice showing gratitude on a daily basis. Fostering an attitude of gratitude will be an ongoing topic throughout the school year. Parents and family members can help by continuing the discussion at home and encouraging students to recognize the positives in their lives.

To our parents, students, and community members: **CSB** is grateful for YOU!

## Survivor: Urban to Wild Adventures Short Course Summary

By: Erica Hogle, O&M Teacher

**CSB** (coordinated by Shelby, Erica, and Stacey) held a residential short course program focusing on emergency preparedness and self-defense at the **California School for the Blind** from January 24-29, 2016. Two students from San Jose came to participate and other students from **CSB** got to join some of the classes too.

Are you knowledgeable about earthquakes? Are you ready if a big earthquake were to come? Well, students that participated expanded their knowledge by learning about natural disasters. They even got to explore the Hayward fault line where there are sites with road damage and shifted sidewalks due to earthquakes!

You may be thinking, what if an earthquake or other natural disaster occurs? What do you need? Ask the students that participated in this short course! They created small emergency kits and discussed creative and practical uses for the items. And it doesn't stop there. These students also constructed emergency mobility devices out of used/recycled materials and tested them out in the community. Outside of the community they also went on a trail hike and learned about more survival techniques, only this time, in the wilderness. They were prepared for it all!

It wasn't only the **CSB** staff teaching them about emergency preparedness. Students also met with emergency medical responders to discuss their job responsibilities and safety skills. They practiced administering CPR and discussed appropriate and necessary information when calling 911. On a visit to a fire station, they explored the firehouse and fire engine and learned about the medical emergencies that firefighters respond to. They also met an emergency medical technician and explored an ambulance. During that time, they learned about the procedures, held different devices, and practiced strapping in and rolling out students on a gurney. And they weren't the only ones having all the fun. All of **CSB** was invited to have the same experience and explore the ambulance as well. Everyone was having a great time.



This jam-packed week also offered cane repair lessons and self-defense classes. On top of it all, the students attending short course also got the great opportunity to get some insight into life at **CSB**. They joined our students in art, goalball, and swimming. They explored the music department and library. They did not only leave our campus with more knowledge about emergency preparedness but a piece of the culture here at **CSB** as well. It was a pleasure having them join our school!



## Leaders in Action

By: Sharon Sacks, Superintendent

Every other month student representatives from **CSB**'s residential program and the Apartment Living Program meet with Dr. Sacks to discuss pressing issues. These include food in the dining hall, ideas for community outings, the Prom, campus Wi-Fi, and repairs in the dorm. These student leaders are positive and provide excellent feedback for **CSB**'s Superintendent and staff.



## CSB Represents at ACSA

By: Gina Ouellette, Director of Student Services

In mid-January, the **CSB** administrative team had the opportunity to attend the annual Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Every Child Counts Symposium. The Every Child Counts Symposium features workshops and seminars specifically related to special education and student services. The conference is intended for school administrators, including school principals, program specialists, special education directors, SELPA directors, and superintendents.

On the first day of the conference, the **CSB** administrative team presented a workshop, *Innovative Practices in Serving Students with Visual Impairments Including Students with Additional Disabilities: The Role of the California School for the Blind as a Statewide Resource*. We had 30 participants show up for our workshop. Attendees learned about the many programs and services **CSB** has to offer to all blind and visually impaired students in California. Topics covered included **CSB**'s referral process, on-site educational programs, off-site mainstream programs, transition programs, assessment team, low vision clinic, assistive technology services, short courses, summer academies, curricula, and consultation. We also discussed the Expanded Core Curriculum and the upcoming transition to UEB. Finally, we took the opportunity to dispel myths about **CSB**, answer questions, and take suggestions for other ways **CSB** can offer support to blind and visually impaired students throughout California.

According to the California Department of Education website, 705,279 students were provided with special education services in the 2013-14 school year. Of that number, 4003 were identified as visually impaired, indicating that VI students make up only about 0.6% of the special education population in California. Given the number of workshops offered at ACSA that covered topics applicable to all special education students, we were thrilled to have 30 participants attend our highly specialized workshop focusing on such a low-incidence disability.

In addition to presenting at the conference, the **CSB** administrators attended workshops on transition planning; legislative updates and other legal issues; differentiating instruction; co-teaching strategies; Common Core; student records; attendance; preschool programming; ESY; and behavioral supports. We gained a great deal of new information to bring back to **CSB** and help strengthen our policies, procedures, and programming.

## WHAT'S COMING UP AT CSB?

**March:** 28th - 31st - Spring Break

**April:** 22nd - Early Dismissal

**May:** 18th - Spring Concert Matinee

19th - Evening Spring Concert

26th - Early Dismissal

27th - School not in session

30th - Memorial Day Holiday

**June:** 2nd - Graduation

3rd - Last day of school



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